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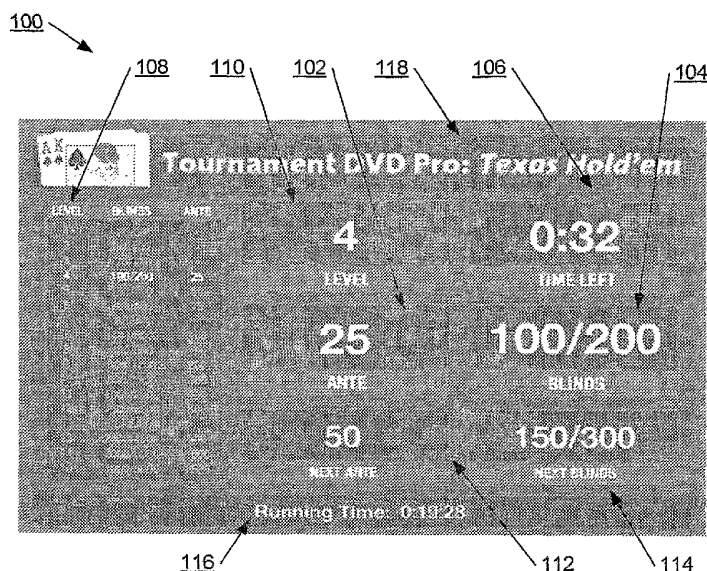
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(54) Title: POKER TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



(57) Abstract: A Poker Tournament Management System (TMS) is disclosed for providing an audiovisual presentation (100) to tournament administrators and participants, wherein a plurality of tournament parameters (102, 104, 106, 108, 110, 112, 114, 116, 118) are displayed and incremented according to a predetermined or user-defined schedule. Various chapters of the presentation (100) that correspond to a level of play are preferably of the same length and each chapter may include an audio and/or visual alert to signal the beginning/end of each chapter, as appropriate. Thus, tournament players and administrators may be apprised of a change in tournament level without constantly scanning the display. The TMS may be authored by sequentially recording portable network graphics or the like to a computer-readable medium such that the medium controls the display of tournament time, and not a clock of a computer system or the like.

POKER TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS:

This application claims priority under 35 U.S.C. §119 to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/659,661 entitled "POKER TOURNAMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM" filed on March 8, 2005 in the name of John M. Packes, Jr. and Anthony Packes, the entirety of which is hereby incorporated by reference.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE DISCLOSURE:

This disclosure relates generally to data processing, and in particular, relates in various embodiments to contest management.

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE:

Games and varieties of poker have been taking place around the world for centuries. In the 1970s, a casino entrepreneur named Benny Binion created a structure and rule set for poker tournaments. The rule set included a consistent amount of chips that each player started with, and a progressive increase of required minimum bets or wagers (including, for example, "antes," "small blinds," and big blinds") by players, over a period of time for which the tournament runs. For example, an ante in a poker tournament may start at 25 chips for level one, increase to 50 chips in level two, 100 in level three, and so on. The amount of time that each level lasts varies among tournaments, but is typically between 15 and 40 minutes. Each player is involved in the tournament until his/her chips run out, and thus is eliminated from the tournament.

This tournament format became popular for many reasons. It allows many players to compete over a reasonable span of time, (generally from 4 hours to 4-5 days depending on number of tournament players), and there is a guaranteed single winner at the end of each tournament. Today hundreds of thousands of poker tournaments are hosted by casinos, card rooms, and individuals around the world per year, and virtually all of them are run according to the principles set forth by Binion.

One challenge that tournament hosts face is keeping track of levels and antes/blinds, and similarly how to inform participants and spectators of the current levels

and antes/blinds. Currently, casinos and card rooms have elaborate hardware/software systems that display current tournament parameters and information on monitors throughout the card room. The systems are typically very expensive, and require specialized hardware and software, as well as installation. Further current systems are vulnerable to failure as they typically are run on computers, typically running an operating system which itself is prone to failure. The computer's internal clock is read by software and dictates tournament time functionality. If the computer's clock is not correct or is inconsistent (e.g. background processes are running and taking up computer resources), the tournament integrity may be compromised. Also worth noting is that tournament data including length, structure, and other parameters are typically propagated by one or more tournament administrators before a tournament, another area where the tournament is prone to failure as incorrect starting parameters may result in the system failing, and interfaces are typically not user-friendly. Also the tournament configuration may not be completed before the scheduled start of the tournament, delaying the tournament and making participants angry. Despite the issues with current tournament management systems, casinos around the world use similar hardware/software based tournament management systems.

Smaller card rooms, as well as home and club tournaments, are not equipped with extravagant poker tournament management systems for a number of reasons, including prohibitive cost of the systems, lack of computer(s) on which to run the system, lack of monitors able to receive computer output on which to display the tournament information, installation costs/restrictions, limited space considerations, unwillingness for administrators to learn new software, or other reasons. This makes tournaments exponentially more difficult for smaller entities to manage and administer, and less pleasurable for the participants to play. Administrators in smaller operations currently are forced to maintain a manual timer and shout out tournament status at fixed intervals. Participants do not enjoy as robust a tournament experience as they are unable to reliably track tournament status information, which can be disadvantageous to their performance in the tournament.

In conclusion, small poker rooms, and individuals hosting poker tournaments generally do not have the resources to have a practical tournament management system, making tournaments more difficult to host and less enjoyable for the players.

Thus there is a need for systems and methods which will allow individuals and small poker establishments, as well as larger tournament venues, an economical solution to quality-controlled poker tournament management. Also there is a need for more reliable and less complicated poker tournament management systems, specifically systems that do not require specialized hardware and software on which to run.

10 SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE:

In various embodiments, the disclosed Tournament Management System (TMS) consists of an authored length of video written to a fixed media (such as a Digital Video Disc) that corresponds to one or more predefined tournament structure(s). Tournament administrators can operate the disclosed TMS using a conventional DVD (Digital Video Disc) player and television, and need no specialized hardware or installation. Once the DVD player is operated and the tournament begins, the television connected to the DVD player will display information including current level, current antes/blinds, next level, next antes/blinds, time remaining at the current level, time until the next break in the tournament, tournament running time, and more.

20 In using a ubiquitous medium such as DVD, the disclosed TMS alleviates virtually all issues with current computer-based tournament management systems, including the prohibitive cost of current computer-based tournament management systems, specialized hardware installation requirements, computer configuration/maintenance/management and software installation, software interface learning curve, computer instabilities and vulnerabilities to user error or malicious programming, reliance on a computer's internal clock for tournament timing purposes, and the like.

According to various embodiments, the TMS may display a plurality of chapters to a user, wherein each chapter may correspond to a separate level of tournament play, and wherein the levels of play may be equal in time duration. An audio and/or visual alert may be generated in advance of or at the completion of a level so as to indicate a level

change to the user. In some embodiments, the alerts may be generated at the commencement of a next chapter. In various embodiments, chapters comprising a break or intermission in tournament play may be included in various places within the TMS. The chapters comprising an intermission may be the same or different in duration than
5 the length of a chapter comprising a level of play.

In various embodiments, a TMS of the present disclosure may be authored by arranging a continuous display of a frame of still image data that defines a predetermined runtime of a chapter, overlaying the frame with variable image data defining displayed increments of units of time within the chapter, whereby display of the increments of units
10 of time during the audiovisual production are controlled only by a runtime of the audiovisual presentation.

In additional embodiments, a TMS of the present disclosure may be authored by generating a computer program that outputs a display having a first portion including static image data and a second portion including a time parameter that displays
15 increments of units of time, running the computer program to generate an output comprising the audiovisual production, and writing the output to a computer-readable medium, whereby display of the increments of units of time during the audiovisual production are controlled only by a runtime of the audiovisual presentation.

In sum, the disclosed TMS provides an affordable and extremely reliable poker
20 tournament management system to players, clubs, card rooms and even casinos of all sizes. With the disclosed TMS, tournament administrators do not need to purchase or install any new hardware or software, exponentially decreasing the cost to host a poker tournament.

25 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ACCOMPANYING DRAWINGS:

Further aspects of the present disclosure will be more readily appreciated upon review of the detailed description of its various embodiments, described below, when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, of which:

FIG. 1 is an illustration of an exemplary display of a TMS as a poker tournament
30 management system, according to various embodiments of the present disclosure; and

FIG. 2 is a flowchart of an exemplary process for generating a TMS according to various aspects of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION:

5 The Tournament Management System (TMS) and its various embodiments disclosed herein are envisioned to operate on a fixed media, for example a DVD (digital video disc). Other media including DVD variations in size and format, CD-ROM (Compact Disc Read-Only Memory), CD-R (Compact Disc Recordable), CD-RW (Compact Disc Re-Writable), solid-state readable memory, and any other machine-
10 readable media is also envisioned, and within the scope of the disclosed TMS.

 In various embodiments, the disclosed TMS is written to a DVD. An administrator operates a DVD player or other hardware device capable of reading media and outputting data from the media. General steps of the disclosed TMS are described below.

15 A tournament administrator may insert the disclosed TMS DVD disc into a DVD player set up at a desired location. Alternatively, the TMS DVD may comprise any media capable of storing machine readable audio/video data including a DVD-ROM (Digital Video Disc-Read Only Memory), DVD-RAM (Digital Video Disc-Random-Access Memory), VHS (Video Home System) tape, CD-ROM, VCD (Video Compact Disc),
20 SVCD (Super Video Compact Disc), solid-state memory module, external data drive, DAT (Digital Audio Tape), etc. Similarly the DVD player may comprise any hardware device, including a personal computing device or personal digital assistant, capable of reading data from the aforementioned media types.

 FIG. 1 depicts an exemplary display 100 provided during an audiovisual
25 production embodied in the TMS described herein. Within the exemplary display 100, various tournament parameters may be presented to tournament participants and administrators. For example, the display 100 may include a field 102 for displaying the current level of antes, a field 104 for displaying a current level of minimum bets (i.e., big and small blinds), a field 106 for displaying the time remaining in the current level of the
30 tournament, a field 108 showing the various levels of the tournament, and in which the current level may be highlighted, a field 110 showing the current level of the tournament,

a field 112 showing the ante amount for the next approaching level of the tournament, a field 114 showing the minimum bet amounts for a next approaching level of the tournament, a field 116 displaying the current runtime of the tournament including all completed levels, and a field 118 that displays the tournament name. The fields displayed may be altered in arrangement and content in any of a wide variety of ways, all of which are contemplated to be used with the present disclosure. In particular, advertising and promotional information could be displayed, in addition to the tournament information. Thus, the display 100 should not be viewed as limiting the scope of the present disclosure.

In various embodiments, the disclosed TMS has fixed tournament parameters or variables, in that all blinds, levels, and timing may be completely predefined and non-editable by a user. Such embodiments have many advantages, one of which is that there can be no user manipulation of the tournament structure. Further, multiple tournaments with various parameters may be encapsulated on one media device. For example, a plurality of tournament structures may be stored on one DVD, so that a user of the DVD may select from one or more tournament structures with associated parameters. In additional embodiments, some tournament variables may be adjustable via, for example, a DVD menu. Such parameters may include an audio level, an order of DVD-based chapters (e.g., a menu may provide a user with an ability to specify which chapters of a DVD of the disclosed TMS are to be played, and in what order the chapters are to be played), or the like.

In various embodiments, a user can use the hardware device on which the disclosed TMS is running to manipulate the tournament structure. For example, if the disclosed TMS is running on a standard DVD player, the administrator has the ability to skip levels, skip breaks, pause the tournament (e.g., in the case of a disputed hand), or the like. Further the administrator can play the DVD at various speeds to increase or decrease the length of the tournament.

As DVD players and other hardware devices used to operate the disclosed TMS are employed and functionality is increased, it is contemplated that many tournament options may be editable via a DVD or hardware device options panel/screen, and/or via the disclosed TMS. For example, advanced DVD menu scripting and device support is

becoming widespread. It is therefore contemplated that advanced scripting can be used in the disclosed TMS in a number of ways, including ability to modify parameters of a tournament, ability to build a menu-based tournament setup feature, ability to modify the speed of playback of a DVD, ability to re-use video, audio, and other visual assets on the DVD in order to fit more functional tournament information on the DVD or media, ability to change colors, sounds, adjust sound volumes, and the like. Parameters that may be able to be modified include: number of levels, time per level, ante/blind (minimum bets) per level, number/length of breaks, countdown time to tournament start, and the like.

In various embodiments, some or all of the tournament parameters within the disclosed TMS are editable. It is envisioned that multiple tournament structures can be stored on one DVD or media, and the administrator can select the tournament he/she would like to run, based on predefined parameters of each available tournament. For example, three different tournaments can be stored on the disclosed TMS, each with associated parameters. One such tournament may have twenty ten-minute levels (or chapters) and be geared toward a Texas Hold'em tournament. Another may have fifteen twenty-minute levels for an Omaha-style tournament, and a third may have twenty-five five-minute levels and be geared toward a Stud Poker-style tournament. Any number of tournament structures can be stored on the media, all of which are included in the scope of the disclosed TMS. The only limitation to the number of tournaments is the size of the media on which the disclosed TMS is stored. Further, multiple tournament structures or parameters may be stored on a single DVD or other media device.

The administrator may begin the tournament by, for example, pressing play on the DVD player or hardware device, selecting a menu item from a menu of the disclosed TMS, etc. Further the disclosed TMS may be authored to play immediately upon inserting it into the hardware device, may include a countdown timer so that the administrator begins the timer, for example, thirty minutes before the tournament is scheduled to begin. This would allow participants to view the time until the tournament officially begins.

Once the tournament begins, the disclosed TMS is operable to be read by a hardware device such as a DVD player and display tournament parameters on a viewing

device such as a television. Parameters may include current level, time remaining at current level, current required wagers (blinds/antes), time until next break, time remaining during a break, tournament running time, next level required wagers, and any other tournament related parameter. In the embodiment that includes the ability for an administrator to modify tournament parameters (above) further tournament data may include total prize pool, number of players, average number of chips per player, total chips outstanding, payout information, and any other tournament related data.

During the tournament player breaks are provided, and a final tournament level at which the disclosed TMS will stay until the tournament is complete (until only one player is left). In another embodiment, the TMS may continue offering levels for an extended period of time. The disclosed TMS may have audio and/or visual alerts to indicate various progress of the tournament, allowing players to focus on the game and not have to watch the output of the disclosed TMS for cues as to the status or progress of the tournament.

According to the features and benefits of the disclosed TMS, the tournament will be run free of many of the deficiencies, risks, and other drawbacks of current computer program-based tournament management systems. It should be appreciated that the disclosed TMS is not based on a computer clock. Rather it is using a media playback rate to dictate units of time, provide countdown functionality, count-up functionality, and the like. Therefore, the runtime of the audiovisual presentation of the TMS controls the display of increments of time with the audiovisual presentation, rather than relying on a processor clock or the like, as in prior systems. In this manner, the time that the disclosed TMS displays is completely unique to the disclosed TMS. Although the focus of this disclosure is poker tournament management, the TMS has applications beyond poker tournament management, as described further herein below. Any such applications are within the scope of the disclosed systems and methods.

In various embodiments, promotional and/or advertising messages can be displayed at fixed or variable intervals during operation of the disclosed TMS. For example, advertisements can be authored into sections of the disclosed TMS, for display during various times in the chapter. Additionally, variable messaging can be included as specified by an administrator or function of the disclosed TMS. For example, audio or

video from another source can be played over or with the disclosed TMS at fixed or variable intervals, during breaks, during initial count-up to tournament start, after the tournament, or the like.

The authoring process of the disclosed TMS is inherently unique and is within the scope of the present disclosure. In various embodiments, the disclosed TMS is authored in a video environment using video authoring software such as SONY VEGAS, FINAL CUT PRO, or equivalent. The authoring process 200, an example of which is displayed in FIG. 2, may first comprise laying out multiple still images in such a way as to create a continuous video clip of a predetermined length of time (step 202). For example, a single frame of video, comprising for example a PNG (Portable Network Graphic) created using software such as ADOBE PHOTOSHOP, and including a frame of continuously displayed data, such as the non-changing elements of the display 100, may be laid out a number of times so as to form a continuous video clip of a predetermined length of time. Next, a series of PNGs or the like, each representing, for example, a change in seconds, may be overlayed in a video authoring program (step 204) at intervals of one second each, creating a video that visually displays seconds ticking within the still image. Multiple images comprising all visual tournament data at fixed increments may be laid out in a linear fashion to create the authored disclosed TMS. For example, a PNG for each second of the tournament with associated parameters may be created, then each laid out to create one or more linear video(s). A combination of still images and video clips may be authored together to create further aspects of the audiovisual presentation (step 204). For example, multiple PNGs representing each level of a tournament may be created which include all non-time based data. So each PNG may have the current level, current blinds/antes, etc. Then, video clips which count time at fixed intervals may be authored on a layer above the PNGs, and repeated as necessary to create the disclosed TMS. For example, a video asset that counts seconds up from :0 to :59 at intervals of one second may be placed to the right of another video clip that counts minutes up from 0 to 20 at fixed one-minute intervals, thus creating a minute and second counter that counts from 0:00 to 20:00. Each asset may be authored as a series of PNGs, as video generated output from a video authoring environment, a video generated output from a rich media program such as MACROMEDIA FLASH, and the like.

In another embodiment, the disclosed TMS may be scripted or programmed using a software program such as MACROMEDIA FLASH, MICROSOFT VISUAL BASIC, MICROSOFT VISUAL C++, SUN MICROSYSTEMS JAVA, or any other program that can allow a programmer to output visual data and/or a program that displays data and/or sound. The programmed embodiment of the disclosed TMS may then be recorded to a machine readable media (step 206), such as DVD playable in a DVD player. For example, the disclosed TMS may be coded in MACROMEDIA FLASH, then output from MACROMEDIA FLASH to an audio/video QUICKTIME file, which can then be converted to the appropriate format and be written to a DVD. Output to QUICKTIME is native to MACROMEDIA FLASH and thus is able to be output from MACROMEDIA FLASH. If the author were to use a program that wasn't able to output audio/video directly, then the output of the program could be captured by an audio/video capture hardware/software combination. For example, if the disclosed TMS were coded in JAVA, an author could run the program, then use a screen-capture program such as TECHSMITH CAMTASIA STUDIO to capture the audio/video output from the program, which in turn would allow the author to write AVI (Audio/Video Interleaved) or other video data based on the audio/video output from the program. Further, the author may send the video out of his/her authoring machine/platform to another hardware device, such as a VCR (Video Cassette Recorder), DVD player with recording capabilities, video capture hardware card, or any other hardware/software device capable of receiving audio/video, and writing the received audio/video to a usable format. The audio/video output from a computer or hardware device can be captured and/or written in many ways known to one of ordinary skill in the art of programming and/or audio/video manipulation, processing, and/or capture.

As above the disclosed TMS may be authored in many ways. One advantage specific to DVD and similar media is the ability for the author to specify segments, or chapters, within the media product. There are many advantages to the use of chapters for the disclosed TMS. For example, each tournament level may reside on its own chapter, creating an indexed product and facilitating the ability to skip levels and/or breaks. Further, chapters may be designated at specific intervals. For example, in an implementation of the disclosed TMS with twenty minute levels, chapters may be in ten

minute increments. This way, if an administrator or group of players want to play a tournament, but play ten minute levels instead of twenty minute levels due to time constraints, the administrator or user can simple press the SKIP button on the DVD player each time a level changes, operatively changing the length of the tournament of the TMS by displaying every other chapter. Further, an administrator may elect to play the tournament at a faster or slower speed, by pressing FFWD or REW on the DVD player one or more times. For example, a tournament can be displayed at, for example, double-speed by pressing fast-forward (FFWD) on the DVD player to replay the DVD at two times normal speed. Faster or slower replay rates may also be achieved in like manner. Thus, unlike conventional DVD media, the TMS of the present disclosure provides a useful display at other than normal playback rates. Such scenarios allow administrators or users the ability to manipulate parameters of the disclosed TMS during play of the tournament, without complicated DVD scripting and associated cross-platform compatibility issues. Multiple chapter scenarios may be authored depending on the specific implementation of the disclosed TMS.

In various embodiments, tournament levels or groups of levels, and chapters including intermissions in play, are to be authored in such a way that the levels are separately encapsulated within a DVD chapter. Chapters in DVDs are segments of the DVD, typically used to allow users to more easily navigate DVD content. DVDs generally have one or more chapters, each corresponding to various time segments within the enclosed audio, video, or audiovisual presentation.

According to various embodiments of the disclosed TMS, tournament levels may correspond to DVD chapters. For example, each tournament level may be presented within a DVD chapter. In such an embodiment, for example, tournament level one may be within chapter one of the DVD, tournament level two within chapter two, and so forth. Further, tournament levels may reside in more than one chapter, and multiple levels may be present within one DVD chapter. For example, chapters one through three may represent various time-based positions of tournament level one. Conversely, chapter one may encapsulate tournament levels one through three. All and any possible combinations of tournament levels and DVD chapters are within the scope of the disclosed TMS.

Chapter indicators may include audio and/or video alerts, and may occur at various times before or when or immediately after chapters end to indicate to users that a next chapter, and thereby, a next level of play is commencing. For example, an audio alert may occur sixty seconds before a DVD chapter is set to end, indicating to users that the chapter will end in sixty seconds. Further, an audio or video alert may occur immediately after a chapter begins. Audio or video alerts may occur at any time during the playback of the disclosed TMS, and may indicate to users the progression of the tournament, imminent end of, or beginning of a DVD chapter.

It is envisioned that audio and/or video alerts will be included with the authored DVD. For example, an authored DVD may play specific audio and/or video at predetermined times within the DVD, and such times may correspond to chapter beginnings and ends, or may correspond to times before or after chapter beginnings and ends. Alternatively, a DVD may be operable to indicate to a DVD player that audio or visual alerts be presented to users. For example, a DVD may contain scripts or other functionality to order a DVD player to display or play a video or audio alert to users. Such displays could include a visual screen of the DVD player to become visible to users, and/or a system "beep" or other audio indicator to be played by the DVD player.

Users in some cases may want to skip certain levels, or replay levels. For example, a user may want to play tournament level one three times. With DVD chapters corresponding to levels, the user would simply press the BACK button on his or her DVD player at the end of the DVD chapter to replay the previous chapter, thus allowing the user to very simply replay the last tournament level.

One benefit to providing successive chapters that correspond to successive levels of tournament play, for example, includes the ability to place an audible alert indicative of the changing of levels and, therefore, antes/blinds during the tournament. Oftentimes, players and tournament administrators are not viewing a display of the tournament parameters provided by the TMS. Advantageously then, the TMS of the present disclosure can include an audio alert to signal the end of each level, for example the change from a current chapter to a next chapter, in order to avoid the overlooking of the completion of a tournament level or the like, and thereby alleviates the need for players and administrators to constantly review the progress of the tournament on the display.

The audio alert may come some seconds in advance of the end of the chapter/level, upon the conclusion of the chapter/level and/or at the commencement of the next chapter level. The audio alert may be a tone, a sequence of tones or a vocal announcement in a desired language, for example, "Level 2 completed" or "Level 2 will end in 30 seconds" or

5 "Level 2 will commence in 30 seconds. The audio alert may be of the same format or may vary with the change in various chapters. In addition to signaling the end of a level, an audio alert may likewise signal the end of an intermission in play or the like. In any event, the purpose of the audible alerts is to signal players and administrators to a change to the next chapter, and therefore, the next level or the next intermission of a tournament.

10 The disclosed TMS discloses a method of keeping a distinct unit of time based on the playback of a media. One disclosed embodiment speaks of a DVD player, playing the disclosed TMS DVD, displaying to viewers the passing of time. In other embodiments, the media may store a unique measurement of time, not necessarily corresponding to actual time passage. For example, tournament players may want to simulate playing a
15 twenty hour poker tournament over the course of two hours. The disclosed TMS may be authored so that ten 'game' seconds pass for every one actual second, creating a situation where actual time does not correspond to game time, and further making the disclosed TMS a standalone timekeeper for unique measurements of time. Applications of this concept go beyond poker tournaments as well. DVD and television based non-poker
20 games may find it useful to use a DVD to keep units of time that correspond to the game.

Even if the systems and methods described herein are authored to represent the actual passing of time, the disclosed TMS does not base its time on a clock, timer, computer, or other timekeeping device, but instead the time of the disclosed TMS is based on a predefined, authored media product and as such acts as a new and useful
25 timekeeping product. Note that in various embodiments, the disclosed TMS may read from the hardware device on which it is playing, and as such may take timecode from, for example, a DVD player on which it is playing. One use of this would be to show the current actual time of day (e.g., GMT) in addition to the time encoded onto the media corresponding to the inventive CMS.

30 The disclosed TMS may include persistent or periodic audio that is adjustable by the administrator or user via his/her hardware device or a menu of the hardware device or

disclosed TMS. For example, casino poker room sounds may play in the background during the tournament to enhance the casino feel to the players, and may be adjustable by the user or administrator. Multiple simultaneous sounds and associated adjustment are also possible via the disclosed TMS and/or the device on which it plays. Further, the disclosed TMS may include a plurality of languages in tournament may be provided. Language options may affect the language in which copy/text of the DVD is presented to a user, the language in which audio of the present TMS is present, etc.

A gaming terminal or gaming console such as SONY PLAYSTATION 2 or MICROSOFT XBOX may be used to run the disclosed TMS. The above and other gaming consoles are capable of playing DVDs. Further, the disclosed TMS may be authored to run on a gaming platform. Based on the programming protocols native to the gaming console, the disclosed TMS authoring process may be augmented so that it is compatible with and able to run on any gaming console. Further, the disclosed TMS may be integrated to a video game as a portion of the video game, or as ride-along software with console video games, computer software, computer programs and/or installations for computer programs, etc. The disclosed TMS may further be operated on any personal computer capable of reading the media on which the disclosed TMS is presented, including a DVD, VCD, solid-state memory, etc.

In various embodiments, the functionality of the disclosed TMS is replicated on a self-contained electronic device capable of generating and/or transmitting audio and video data to an audio and/or visual display device. For example the disclosed TMS can be embodied within an electronic device with audio and video outputs capable of connecting to audio and video inputs on a TV, VCR, etc. The electronic device may then run a series of steps or processes to carry out the methods of the present TMS including but not limited to generating a visual display of time, generating at least one measurement of a length of time or time remaining within an event, a required wager based on current time, etc. The self-contained electronic device may comprise a series of ROM (Read Only Memory) and RAM (Random Access Memory) chips containing audio, video, and/or programmatic functionality consistent with the disclosed TMS. Further, the device may be capable of transmitting audio/video data to a receiving device such as a television, personal computer, PDA (personal digital assistant), cellular phone,

or any other device capable of receiving and/or transmitting audio and/or video. The self-contained electronic device may be operable to receive at least one input from a user of the device via an interface or input device of the self-contained electronic device, for example, a keypad, remote control, or any other input device capable of communicating
5 with the self-contained electronic device.

In various embodiments, a user is able to customize at least one element of a tournament (i.e., enter preferred tournament parameters and the like) via an interface and/or computer-based application, which may be performed locally or over a computer network such as the Internet. The application will then facilitate 'burning' or creation of a
10 customized DVD based on the user's customization and/or with accompanying predefined elements to be included with the user's customizations. The application may be operable to generate and encode video for DVD presentation. Further, the application may be operable to generate a series of still images (e.g., JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) format) and then encode the still images to create a video suitable for
15 playback via DVD, or other media (discussed above). The application may generate the video or still-image media before or during the DVD or media creation process. For example, the application may require an amount of time to generate, play, and capture the video, or may generate the video in real-time as the DVD is being created.

Multiple audio streams can be included in the media. For example, a DVD may
20 have multiple channels and/or streams of audio with different voices, content, languages, audio formats, and the like. A DVD may further contain synchronized or unsynchronized meta-data including but not limited to closed caption text, machine readable code, and/or computer specific code. Computer specific code may comprise actions or functions that, for example, call a Web site, send and/or receive updates or other data from an external
25 data source such as a Web server.

Although the best methodologies have been particularly described in the foregoing disclosure, it is to be understood that such descriptions have been provided for purposes of illustration only, and that other variations both in form and in detail can be made thereupon by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope
30 thereof, which is defined first and foremost by the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for presenting an audiovisual production, comprising:
displaying a plurality of chapters to a user; and
5 generating an audio alert to indicate a change from a current chapter to a next chapter.
2. The method of claim 1, said audiovisual production for use in a tournament.
- 10 3. The method of claim 2, said tournament comprising a poker tournament.
4. The method of claim 3, each chapter corresponding to a separate level of minimum bets for the poker tournament.
- 15 5. The method of claim 4, wherein the minimum bets change with each successive chapter.
6. The method of claim 4, said displaying further comprising:
displaying, within each chapter, tournament parameters comprising at least one
20 of: a running time of the tournament, a time remaining for a level of the tournament, an ante level for the tournament and a level of minimum bets for the tournament.
7. The method of claim 6, wherein the tournament parameters are user-defined.
- 25 8. The method of claim 3, wherein at least one chapter corresponds to an intermission in the tournament.
9. The method of claim 1, said displaying further comprising:
sequentially displaying the plurality of chapters to the user.

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10. The method of claim 1, wherein at least two of the plurality of chapters have equal run times.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein the audible alert occurs prior to an end of a chapter.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the audio alert occurs at an end of a chapter.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein the audio alert occurs upon a commencement of a chapter.

14. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
generating a visual alert to indicate the change to the next chapter.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
authoring the audiovisual production by arranging a continuous display of a frame of still image data that defines a predetermined runtime of a chapter of the audiovisual production; and

overlaying the frame with variable image data defining displayed increments of time of the audiovisual presentation within the chapter.

16. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

authoring the audiovisual production by generating a computer program that outputs a display of having a first portion including static image data and a second portion including a time parameter that displays increments of units of time;

running the computer program to generate an output comprising the audiovisual production; and

writing the output to a computer-readable medium, whereby display of the increments of units of time during the audiovisual production are controlled only by a runtime of the audiovisual presentation.

17. A method of authoring an audiovisual production, comprising:

arranging a continuous display of a frame of still image data that defines a predetermined runtime of a chapter of the audiovisual production; and

5 overlaying the frame with variable image data defining displayed increments of units of time of the audiovisual presentation within the chapter, whereby display of the increments of units of time during the audiovisual production are controlled only by a runtime of the audiovisual presentation.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising:

10 displaying a plurality of chapters to a user within the audiovisual production; and generating an audio alert to indicate a change from a current chapter to a next chapter.

19. A method of authoring an audiovisual production, comprising:

15 generating a computer program that outputs a display of having a first portion including static image data and a second portion including a time parameter that displays increments of units of time;

running the computer program to generate an output comprising the audiovisual production; and

20 writing the output to a computer-readable medium, whereby display of the increments of units of time during the audiovisual production are controlled only by a runtime of the audiovisual presentation.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

25 displaying a plurality of chapters to a user within the audiovisual production; and generating an audio alert to indicate a change from a current chapter to a next chapter.

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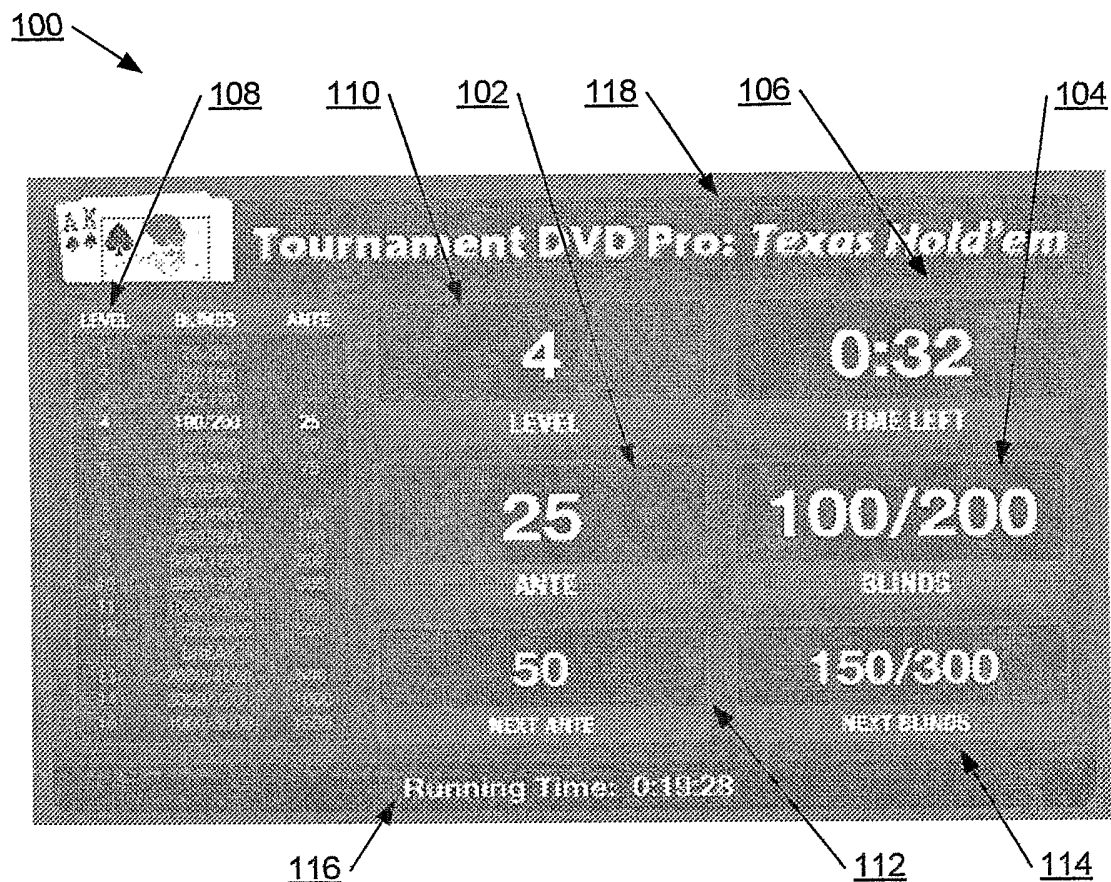


FIG. 1

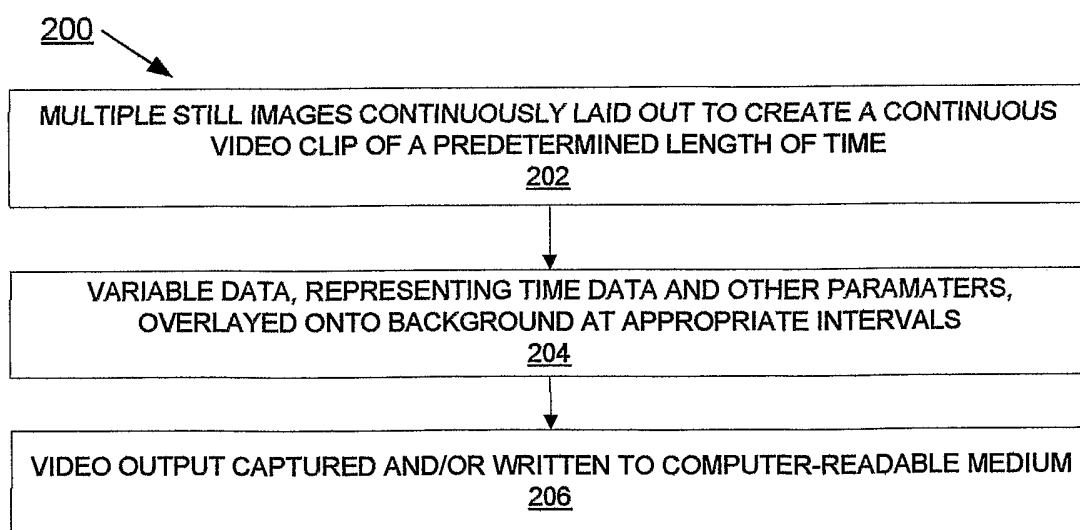


FIG. 2

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US06/08189

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC: **G06F 17/00**(2006.01),**19/00**(2006.01)

USPC: 463/13,42

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 463/11-13,42; 273/309

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
Internet Non-Patent Literature Search using Yahoo/Google Search Engines.

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	"PokerTimer - The Original Online Talking Poker Tournament Timer" [online] [retrieved 2006-19-06] [dated 2004-28-05] <URL: http://web.archive.org/web/20040528072347/www.pokertimer.com/Default.aspx >. 4 pages. See entire document.	1-20
X	"PokerTimer Review". Home Poker Tourney. [online] [retrieved 2006-19-06] [dated 2004-22-11] <URL: http://web.archive.org/web/20041122092047/www.homepokertourney.com >. 2 pages. See entire document.	1-20
X	"Poker Tournament Manager - Poker Clock & Poker Tournament Software" [online] [retrieved 2006-19-06] [dated 2005-05-03] <URL: http://web.archive.org/web/20060620003420/http://www.pokertournamentmanager.com/index.aspx >. 2 pages. See entire document.	1-20



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:		"T"	later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"A"	document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"X"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"E"	earlier application or patent published on or after the international filing date	"Y"	document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"L"	document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"&"	document member of the same patent family
"O"	document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means		
"P"	document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		

Date of the actual completion of the international search

19 June 2006 (19.06.2006)

Date of mailing of the international search report

19 JUL 2006

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORTInternational application No.
PCT/US06/08189**C. (Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	"The Tournament Director" [online] [retrieved 2006-19-06] [dated 2004-16-11] <URL: http://web.archive.org/web/20041116032719/http://www.thetournamentdirector.net >. 2 pages. See entire document.	1-20
P,A	US 2005/0215300 A1 (Oliveras) 29 September 2005, See entire document.	1-20